

Kingdom Citizens

By Kent Heaton

“If you are a Christian, you are not a citizen of this world trying to get to heaven; you are a citizen of heaven making your way through this world” (Vance Havner). The biggest challenge for the Christian is to realize the world about him is not his home but his home is the world about to come. “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” (Phil. 3:20-21).

We are citizens of Heaven! Our passport does not read “Earth.” Traveling in a foreign country one is always aware they are not of the land. They do not speak the same language, follow the same culture, and look forward to the day when they can return home. The Christian is a heaven national with all ties to the King of Kings. We serve His law and live by His decrees. Heaven bound people do not speak the language of this world nor follow the culture of Satan’s realm. As children of God we are foreigners in the land of this earth.

We are longing citizens. Our life is on the earth by virtue of time but we look to the day when time will be no more and we are able to go home. As we look at the world around us we desire to be clothed with a greater glory. Only the people of God can see the realities of mortality – it is but a fleeting moment. The earth “is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever” (1John 2:17). Longing for Christ to return helps us see through the eye of faith that only those who abide in God will live forever. Our eagerness comes from taking our eyes off worthless things and seeking the things that are above where Christ is (Col. 3:1).

We are transformed citizens. When we obeyed the gospel we changed our lives to conform to the image of the Son of God (Col. 3:10). In death we will be transformed into the eternal image of God (1John 3:1-3). Citizens of Heaven will leave the portal of time and change into the glory of infinite glory as the saved. Transformation there requires transformation here. Without transformation here there can be no transformation there. We are people of God fighting the good fight of faith receiving the crown of life in victory. The good news is the war has been won (Rev. 20:10-21:4). Lord, come quickly.

Superman Forgets

A favorite Far Side cartoon is captioned “Superman in his later years.” It shows the elderly Man of Steel perched on a window ledge, ready to leap, as he looks back and says, “Now where was I going?” Forgetfulness happens to us all, and while our occasional lapses may be amusing or annoying, a lack of memory toward God can be disastrous.

With the people of Israel poised to enter the Promised Land, Moses challenged them to “remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness” (Deut. 8:2) and to “beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments” (v.11).

Forgetting God can spring from: Testing (vv.2-4). God allowed His people to hunger and then provided manna. When we lack the necessities of life, it’s easy to feel that God has somehow forgotten us. From satisfaction (vv.10-11). Abundance or need may produce spiritual amnesia because both cause us to focus on ourselves, not on God who provides. From pride (vv.12-16). If prosperity brings a feeling of self-accomplishment, then we have forgotten God. Humility, obedience, and praise help us remember God’s faithful provision and care. Let’s not forget to thank Him today for all He’s done.

Jill Remembers

Jill Price has an extraordinary memory that has stunned scientists. In 2006, her overdeveloped memory was described in a scientific journal article, "A Case of Unusual Autobiographical Remembering." Price has no special aptitude for memorizing lists of words, numbers, facts, or languages. But she does remember what happened to her on any given day over the last 30 years. Name any date and Price will tell you what day of the week it was, the weather, what she had for breakfast, the TV programs she watched, and the people she spoke with.

Few of us have a memory like that. That's why we need reminders to complete simple tasks and keep our appointments. This is especially true when it comes to spiritual truth. The apostle Peter showed he understood the need of spiritual reminders when he wrote: "I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things... Yes, I think it is right... to stir you up by reminding you... Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things" (2Peter 1:12-15).

No matter what kind of memory we have, we need to be reminded of Biblical principles. Daily Bible reading, small group studies, and involvement in a local church can all help us to remember God's vital truths.

A Clerk Remembers to Forget

A clerk helped a customer purchase a small digital voice recorder by telling him that he kept one just like it in his car. "When I began driving home after work I switched it on," he said, "and I talked about everything that happened that day on the job, good and bad. When I pulled into my driveway, I hit the erase button." Then he smiled. After telling everything to his voice recorder, he apparently had no need to go over the day's problems with his wife or family.

This reminds us of how often we needlessly rehearse our disappointments and problems to others instead of telling them to God. The psalmist wrote: "Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us" (Psalm 62:8). Twice he spoke of waiting silently for God, his rock and salvation (vv. 1-2, 5-7).

While there is great comfort in sharing our difficulties with a friend, we miss the greatest help if we fail to bring them to the Lord. Joseph Scriven said it so well: "No matter where we are, Jesus is only a prayer away."

A Moments Wisdom

--Forgiving does not erase the bitter past. A healed memory is not a deleted memory. Instead, forgiving what we cannot forget creates a new way to remember. We change the memory of our past into a hope for our future.

--Each day of our lives we make deposits in the memory banks of our children.

--There are lots of people who mistake their imagination for their memory.

--If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything.

--The advantage of a bad memory is that one enjoys several times the same good things for the first time.

--Why is it that our memory is good enough to retain the least triviality that happens to us, and yet not good enough to recollect how often we have done it to others?